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SUBCOMMITTEE ON ANTITRUST, COMMERCIAL  
AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAW

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES



JAMIE RASKIN  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
8TH DISTRICT, MARYLAND

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND REFORM

CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS  
AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION  
VICE CHAIR

April 21, 2020

General David H. Berger  
Commandant of the Marine Corps  
Headquarters, US Marine Corps  
3000 Marine Corps, Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20350-3000

Dear General Berger:

Amid the global health crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and in consideration of the health and welfare of our U.S. Marines, we urge you to consider temporarily relaxing grooming standards within the U.S. Marine Corps to protect both Marines and the barbers and hairdressers who serve them. Furthermore, we are seeking information about any specific safeguards you have implemented at base barber shops to ensure that both service members and barber shop employees are being protected. At a time when social distancing has been imposed across the country and proven to be a successful public health measure, Marines are unnecessarily being put at risk of infection in order to comply with traditional grooming standards that may be optimal in an ideal world but are inessential and can be relaxed in the real world without doing any damage at all to institutional mission or national security. This matter has been raised with me by families of a number of Marines and I am persuaded that they have a compelling point.

On March 16, President Trump released the Coronavirus Guidelines for America, which directed all Americans to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people. However, groups of Marines in greater numbers have been routinely observed congregating inside and outside of barber shops on installations around the country as they wait to get haircuts. In comparison, all civilian barber shops and hair salons have been declared “non-essential” businesses and closed in order to prevent the spread of this deadly virus. The key problem is the necessary physical proximity of barbers and their client, an obvious and extended violation of the six-foot social distancing advice recommended by the CDC.

Temporarily relaxed grooming standards would reduce unnecessary close contact between Marines and barbers who are both putting themselves and their families and communities at risk by working in such close proximity to potentially infected individuals every day. It would only take one infected Marine sitting down in a barber chair, or one infected barber breathing too close to a client, to start a chain reaction that could infect a large population that forms part of our fighting force.

With the pandemic gripping our nation and invading all aspects of society on and off military installations, we ask that you carefully consider the matter and take steps to dramatically reduce person-to-person contact on base at the point of potential transmission by temporarily relaxing grooming standards relating to haircuts.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jamie Raskin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jamie" and last name "Raskin" clearly distinguishable.

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress